

MUUC NEXT STEPS PROCESS

Final Report Summary & Next Steps Plan

BACKGROUND

- In fall 2022, the MUUC Board contracted with Liz Coit, a consultant with the UUA-affiliated organization Stewardship for Us, to lead a church-wide program focused on In-Gathering and Community Building: the Next Steps Process (NSP).
- The program was initiated to build on the excitement and enthusiasm of coming back together again as a community post-pandemic, to assess where we are as a community during these changing times and what we want our future to look like.
- Over three months, Liz Coit reviewed dozens of church documents, toured the building, and spoke with more than 70 MUUC members and friends about experiences, concerns, dreams, and general reflections. Her research concluded with a Next Steps Weekend in mid-November that included dinner with the Board, lunch with church Past Presidents, meeting with church leadership, and a presentation to the congregation during the Sunday service.
- On December 1st, we received a comprehensive NSP Final Report based on those conversations, document analysis, and her years of experience working with UU churches across the country. The report was first reviewed by an NSP Board Task Group (Jennie Wengrovius/President, Liz Foulser/VP, Cathy Sang/member, and Rev. Susanne), then presented to the Board for review at its December meeting.
- Because the NSP Final Report contains a great deal of information about many aspects of the church and numerous recommendations to consider as we move to a yet-unknown future, the Board decided we should move forward slowly, taking the time needed to examine and understand the information presented.
- The NSP Board Task Group, with the addition of church member Rebecca Mooney, was asked to plan and implement sharing the Final Report and our next steps in this journey with the congregation.

Final Report Summary

- **MUUC is in a good place**

- Way ahead of many other churches in the speed and comprehensiveness of its conversion to a virtual world
- Overall congregation generosity has remained strong
- Critical building repairs have been addressed or are in the pipeline
- Staff is at its full complement
- A strong and appreciated full-time minister
- Formation of Anti-Racism and Immigration Team Ministries well-conceived and implemented
- Well-functioning committees and teams
- A broad array of community activities available
- Financial due diligence in place
- Well-run Stewardship (pledge) program with nearly 100% participation
- Stable and diversified revenue streams

- **Concerns/Cautious Notes**

- Attention to membership and new member recruitment
 - In-person & local membership: retention & initial welcome (focus here first)
 - Is online membership possible? Desirable?
- Need for more robust communications and marketing
 - Form a standing committee?
 - Strategically planned external outreach taps into potential new audiences and future congregants

- **Governance and decision making**

- Decision making and governance may need to be restructured or replaced in part by a new staffing configuration because MUUC is a layered church in terms of its size and cultural characteristics and is multi-generational
 - Technically we are a pastoral-size church (51-150 members), but we operate partially like a family-size congregation (50 and less) and mostly like a program-size church (151-400 members) without the necessary resources, staff, or volunteers to support all we want to do

- Our congregation spans several generations with different relationships to spirituality, buildings, money, community and community service
- If fewer people can commit to serve on a long-standing committee, consider more short-term, one-off volunteer, time-bound, and seasonal opportunities
- The Board should review the church bylaws, policies and procedures, consider being more visible as spokespeople inside and outside the church, and being more active in stewardship and membership efforts
- The Property Committee should provide the Board with a) a list of the lifetime use of all equipment and specific facilities and their future costs, and b) a list of anticipated capital expenditures over the next three to 10 years.
- The Property Committee should also be more integrated with other church activities and committees so that there is more deliberate back-and-forth discussion.
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- **Planning for the future**
 - We are living in a liminal time: the past (pre-pandemic) is behind us and the future is not clear. We must learn our way through it. It is a time of learning and experimenting, living with fluid action plans and iterative planning and adjusting.
 - Focus on a Learning Agenda, coordinated by a core group of representative leaders who first explore contextual issues affecting MUUC and then develop a Landscape overview document for review.
 - Assess readiness to take on a strategic planning process: who should be on the team, re-visit the Mission and Vision Statements.
 - Explore needs and ability to launch a capital campaign

Plans for MUUC's Next Steps Journey

- Share NSP Final Report and Summary with the congregation (January)
- Schedule opportunities for discussion (January - February)
- Create a Learning Agenda by establishing teams to explore: (January -May)
 - Our Governance Function and Structure (led by Jennie W.)

- Spiritual Support for Families, Children, and Youth (led by Rebecca M.)
- Spiritual Support for Adults & Elders (led by Cathy S.)
- Our Wider Community (led by Rev. Susanne)
- Have Learning Teams report findings to the congregation at the Annual Meeting (May 2023)
- Decide on next steps in process (TBD)